THE

Biſhop of *LONDON*'s

PASTORAL LETTER

TO THE

PEOPLE

OF HIS

DIOCESE;

Particularly, to thoſe of the two great Cities of *London* and *Weſtminſter*.

Occaſion'd by ſome late Writings in favour of INFIDELITY:

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To the People *of his Dioceſe;*

Particularly, to thoſe of the two great Cities of *London* and *Weſtminſter.*

Occaſion'd by ſome late Writings in favour of Infidelity.

THE Office I bear in the Church of Chriſt, and my particular relation to this Dioceſe, oblige me to ſtudy your Spiritual Good, and to warn you of any Danger to which I ſee you expos'd, either in Principle or Practice. For tho' you are committed, as to your Spiritual Affairs, to the more immediate Care and Direction of Parochial Miniſters, yet not ſo, as to ceaſe to be a part of the Epiſcopal Care; eſpecially, in caſes where the Concern is general, and the Dangers ſuch, as may not fall under the Obſervation of every particular Pa-

ſtor. And I am not without hope, that what I ſhall ſay to you, will be more generally attended to, and make an Impreſſion ſomewhat ſtronger, as it comes to you directly from the hands of your Biſhop; and, being not ſpoken, but written, you will have better Opportunity to peruſe, conſider, and apply it, with ſuch Care and Deliberation as the importance of the Matters deſerves.

This Method, I own, is uncommon, but ſo is the *Occaſion* too; and no where ſo great and preſſing, as in theſe two large and populous Cities; whether we conſider the variety of Temptations, or the powerful Influence of bad Examples; the corrupt Principles and Practices which firſt ſpring up here, or the quick and eaſy Propagation of them from hence into all parts of the Kingdom; which makes the checking and ſuppreſſing them here as much as poſſible, to be truly a *National* Concern.

They who live in theſe great Cities, or have had frequent recourſe to them, and have any Concern for Religion, muſt have obſerv'd to their great grief, 'That Profaneneſs and Impiety are grown bold and open; 'That a new ſort of Vice of a very horrible nature, and almoſt unknown before in theſe parts of the world, was ſpringing up and gaining ground among us, if it had not been check'd by the ſeaſonable care of the Civil Adminiſtration; 'That in ſome late Writings, *Publick Stews* have been openly vindicated, and *Publick Vices* recommended to the Protection of the Government, as *Publick Benefits*; and, 'That great pains have been taken to make Men eaſy in their Vices, and to deliver them from the reſtraints of Conſcience, by undermining all Religion,

ligion, and promoting Atheiſm and Infidelity; and, what adds to the Danger, by doing it under ſpecious Colours and Pretences of ſeveral kinds. One, under pretence of oppoſing the Encroachments of Popery, thereby to recommend himſelf to the unwary Proteſtant Reader, has labour'd at once to ſet aſide all Chriſtian Ordinances, and the very Being of a Chriſtian Miniſtry and a Chriſtian Church; Another, under colour of great zeal for the Jewiſh Diſpenſation, and the *literal* meaning of Scripture, has been endeavouring to overthrow the Foundations of the Chriſtian Religion; A third, pretending to raiſe the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour to a more exalted and ſpiritual Meaning, has labour'd to take away the Reality of them, and by that to deſtroy one of the principal Evidences of Chriſtianity. Others have ſhown a great zeal for *Natural* Religion in oppoſition to Reveal'd, with no other view, as it ſeems, than to get rid of the reſtraints of Reveal'd Religion, and to make way for an unbounded Enjoyment of their corrupt Appetites and vicious Inclinations, no leſs contrary in reality to the obligations of Natural Religion, than of Reveal'd. And all or moſt of theſe Writers, under colour of pleading for the Liberties of Mankind, have run into an unprecedented *Licentiouſneſs*, in treating the ſerious and important Concerns of Religion, in a *ludicrous* and *reproachful* manner.

Theſe are things, which no ſerious Chriſtian, I might add, no ſerious Deiſt who has any ſenſe of God upon his Mind, and any regard to Virtue and Morality or even to common Decency and Order, can behold and reflect on, without a very ſenſible Concern. Much more ought the Miniſters of the Goſpel to be awake, and

to double their Care over the Souls committed to their Charge, when they ſee ſo many Devices ſet on foot to corrupt and poiſon them, both in their Principles and Morals. Accordingly, on this occaſion many excellent Books have been publiſh'd in defence of the Chriſtian Religion, againſt thoſe Writings in favour of Infidelity. In which Books, the Authors have with great learning, ſtrength and perſpicuity, maintain'd the cauſe of Religion, and detected the Sophiſtry of it's Adverſaries; Whoſe Art it has been, in ſome caſes, to lay hold on little Circumſtances, as if the *whole* of Chriſtianity depended upon them, and by that to draw the Reader's Attention from the moſt plain and ſubſtantial Arguments for the truth of it; and at other times, by *perplexing* and *miſapplying* the plaineſt Proofs, to make way for their own Interpretations, and for impoſing them more eaſily upon unwary and ignorant Readers; and, which is no leſs unfair and diſingenuous, to miſrepreſent the Senſe of judicious Writers, and to pick weak Arguments out of thoſe who are leſs guarded, in order to expoſe the whole as ridiculous. To defeat theſe indirect Arts and Endeavours, the ſame learned Writers have taken off thoſe falſe Colours, and placed the Evidences of Chriſtianity upon their true foundation; and, by ſetting them in their proper and genuin light, and repreſenting them in their united ſtrength, have abundantly ſhown, that no impartial and unprejudic'd perſon who conſiders them with attention, can doubt of their force and ſufficiencie to convince any reaſonable and well-diſpoſed Mind.

But becauſe theſe Writings are too large and too learned, to be read and examin'd by the generality of People; and conſiſt of ſuch a chain

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of Reaſoning, as Perſons of common Capacity cannot eaſily follow and comprehend; who, as they have leſs leiſure as well as ability to enter into particular Examinations, are more liable to be impos'd upon, and more likely to be attack'd by the Enemies of Chriſtianity: For this reaſon, I have thought it incumbent upon me, to draw up for your uſe ſome few Rules and Cautions, which are ſhort and eaſy, and which being frequently perus'd and duly attended to, may be a Means, under the bleſſing of God, to preſerve ſincere and unprejudic'd Chriſtians from theſe dangerous Infections.

I. *Be ſure that you have a Mind ſincerely deſirous to* know *the Will of God, and firmly reſolv'd to comply with whatever ſhall* appear *to be his Will.* This is a neceſſary preparation for the knowledge of Divine Truths, 'To be willing to know, and ready to practiſe;' without which, men not only *may* be eaſily deceiv'd by others, but are in effect determin'd beforehand to deceive themſelves. Where there is an unwillingneſs to part with Luſts and Pleaſures and worldly Intereſts, there muſt of courſe be a *Deſire* that the Chriſtian Religion ſhould not be true, and a *willingneſs* to favour and embrace any Argument that is brought againſt it, and to cheriſh any Doubts and Scruples that ſhall be rais'd concerning it. From a Mind ſo diſpos'd and ſo prejudic'd in favour of the Enemy, Chriſtianity cannot expect a fair hearing, but on the contrary all the diſadvantage and oppoſition that Luſts and Paſſions can ſuggeſt. And therefore our Saviour lays down this, as the true foundation of Divine Knowledge, *If any Man will do God's will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*; implying, that a ſincere *deſire* to know the Truth, John vii. 17.

Truth, with an honeſt diſpoſition to conform our wills and affections to it when known, is the beſt Preſervative againſt Error in Religion, and carries with it a well-grounded aſſurance of the divine Aid, to aſſiſt Perſons ſo diſpos'd in their Enquiries after Truth. And the words do alſo carry in them this other Aſſertion, That whoever is *not* firſt ſincerely diſpos'd to do the Will of God, he ſhall be in great danger of *not* knowing the Doctrine whether it be of God, and of remaining in a ſtate of Ignorance and Error.

II. *As a farther proof of your Sincerity, be careful and diligent in the uſe of all thoſe* Means, *which God has afforded you for the right underſtanding of his Will:* Particularly, in reading the Scriptures, and making them familiar to you, and comparing one part of them with another; by which a moderate Capacity may make conſiderable advancement in the knowledge of Religion. And you muſt not fail to pray to God, that in all your Searches and Enquiries after the Truth, he will be pleas'd to guide and direct you by his Holy Spirit; which he is always ready to vouchſafe to every humble and ſincere Mind. And if after all your own Endeavours, you meet with difficulties of any kind; have recourſe to ſome perſons of piety and learning, upon whoſe knowledge and judgment you believe you may ſafely rely. Only beware, that the Difficulties be not owing, either to a *willingneſs* on your part to raiſe them, or to the indulging your ſelves in over-curious and needleſs Enquiries.

III. *After you have ſecur'd the Sincerity of your own Hearts, attend to the* Lives *of thoſe who endeavour to ſeduce you, or whom you ſee endeavouring*

ing to ſeduce others: Whether, in the general courſe of them, they have been ſober, and regular, and virtuous; or, on the contrary, vicious and irregular. If the latter; do not wonder that they take ſo much pains to reaſon themſelves into Infidelity, without which their Minds cannot be eaſy in the enjoyment of their Vices; nor that they become Advocates for it, and are induſtrious to gain Proſelytes, on purpoſe to keep themſelves in countenance, and to make their Vices leſs infamous, by being more faſhionable. Take it for granted, that ſuch Men are Enemies to Religion, for no other reaſon, but becauſe Religion is an Enemy to their Luxury and Luſts. For as it has been already obſerv'd under the firſt head, that a Mind virtuouſly diſpos'd and ſincerely deſirous to underſtand the Will of God, is the beſt preparation for the knowledge of the Truth; ſo is a vicious mind and a *willingneſs* and *inclination* to disbelieve, the natural and neceſſary parent of *Error* and *Deluſion*.

And as ſome are naturally led by their *Luſts*, to oppoſe the doctrines of Chriſtianity; ſo others are led by *Pride* and *Self-conceit*, to raiſe doubts and diſputes concerning any Opinions and Doctrines which are generally receiv'd and eſtabliſh'd, how evident ſoever it may be, that the Doctrines they oppoſe are agreeable to all the principles of Virtue in general, and of Chriſtianity in particular. Such men diſdain to think in the *common* way; and valuing themſelves upon a more than ordinary ſhare of Knowledge and Penetration, do always affect Novelty and Singularity in Opinion. Which *oppoſing* humour was well expreſs'd by one of our modern Advocates for Infidelity, in what he is reported

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ed to have ſaid of one of his Fellow-labourers to this effect, ‘ That if his own Opinions were *eſtabliſh'd* to day, he would oppoſe them to morrow.’ When therefore you obſerve any perſon to be eager and forward in raiſing doubts and ſcruples about the Doctrines of Chriſtianity, who alſo on *other* occaſions appears to take a delight in diſputing, and wrangling, and oppoſing the general Sentiments of mankind; wonder not at it, but place it, as you well may, to the account of Pride, and Self-conceit, and, the natural effect of theſe, a Spirit of Contradiction.

IV. *When you meet with any Book upon the Subject of Religion, that is written in a* ludicrous *or* unſerious *manner; take it for granted that it proceeds from a* deprav'd *mind, and is written with an* irreligious *deſign.* Such Books are calculated, not to inform the Underſtanding, but to corrupt the Heart. There is no Subject, how grave or ſublime ſoever in it ſelf, but may be turn'd into jeſt and ridicule; and by being ſo turn'd, may be made to appear mean and deſpicable. And the Promoters of Infidelity very well know, that if by this artifice they can take off the Reverence that belongs to Religion, the Minds of the people are eaſily carried into a diſregard of it and an indifference about it; which is of courſe an inlett to Vice; and Vice quickly improves an Indifference about Religion, into a *Prejudice* againſt it, and by degrees into a profeſs'd *Enmity* to it. Be ſure therefore to avoid this Snare; and do not only lay aſide, but abhor all ſuch Books as turn Religion into jeſt and mirth: For, next to the writing and publiſhing them, there is not a more certain ſign of a deprav'd and irreligious Mind, than the finding

ing any degree of *ſatisfaction* and *complacency* in them.

V. *Be not perſwaded to part with* Revelation, *under pretence of relying on* Natural Reaſon *as your only Guide.* For Reaſon without the aſſiſtance given it by Revelation, has in fact appear'd to be a very inſufficient Guide. For which we may appeal to the endleſs and irreconcileable differences among the ancient Philoſophers, not only in Speculative Opinions, but in the great Rules of Duty, as to what is right or wrong, lawful or unlawful; and even in the *chief End* or *Good* which Man ought to propoſe to himſelf in order to his Happineſs. And it would be very ſtrange, to ſuppoſe that the generality of mankind have ſufficient *leiſure* and *ability* to enter into the depths of Philoſophy, and to compare the Opinions of the ſeveral Philoſophers, and to determin, upon the foot of natural Reaſon, which of them is in the right and which in the wrong. And much more extraordinary would it be to expect, that for the ſake of ſuch an uncertain and impracticable Rule, they ſhould lay aſide a plain, clear and uniform Scheme of Duty, obvious to the meaneſt Capacities, and fully atteſted to come from God.

But ſuppoſe the Philoſophers had furniſh'd us with a *conſiſtent* and *uniform* Scheme of moral Duties, which they are very far from having done; there are many other things that Revelation has diſcover'd to us, which were either wholly unknown, or known very imperfectly, to the beſt and wiſeſt among them, and yet are abſolutely neceſſary to give Mankind a full knowledge of their Duty, and to make them proceed in it with Comfort and Conſtancy. Such are, 'The way in which an *acceptable Worſhip*

may be perform'd to the Deity; 'The certain method of obtaining Pardon of Sin, and Reconciliation to God, and ſupernatural Aſſiſtance to enable us to do his Will; and, 'That moſt powerful motive to Duty and Obedience, the *full Aſſurance* of Rewards and Puniſhments in another Life, according to our behaviour in this; without a firm perſwaſion of which (much firmer than any Philoſopher ever arriv'd to) it is morally impoſſible that Mankind, in this corrupt State, ſhould be reſtrained from Exceſs and Violence, and preſerved in a regular and orderly courſe of Duty.

But the truth is; *Natural Religion*, as ſet up againſt Revelation by our preſent Advocates for Infidelity, is very different from that which the wiſeſt of the Ancient Philoſophers diſcover'd by the light of Reaſon; and this, in ſome very material Points. With the one, the Government of the *Appetites* was their great Foundation of Virtue and Goodneſs; but with the other, the great aim ſeems to be to *gratifie* them; and ſo, their main objection againſt Chriſtianity muſt be, that it requires Self-denial, and lays reſtraints upon the irregular Appetites of Mankind. The ancient Moraliſts labour'd by all the arguments they could find, to give themſelves what they thought a *comfortable* Hope of the Immortality of the Soul and a future State; but there is too much cauſe to believe, that our modern Reaſoners do not *wiſh* or *deſire* that theſe things may be true; on the contrary, the great aim of all their Endeavours ſeems to be, to root the apprehenſion of them out of the World. The wiſeſt and moſt learned of the Philoſophers of old, ſaw and lamented their own Ignorance, and the Imperfection of the utmoſt Knowledge that

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Natural Reaſon can attain to, and the great neceſſity there was of ſome further Light. But our modern Philoſophers are ſelf-ſufficient; ſo far from deſiring further light of any kind, that it is one part of their character to diſclaim all Aſſiſtance, even though it be from a divine Revelation. The Ancients preſerv'd the greateſt Reverence for things Sacred; but their pretended Succeſſors in our Times, turn every thing that is Sacred into Jeſt and Ridicule. So that, Natural Religion, as now contended for among us, ſeems not to be meant for a Rule of Duty, but only a ſpecious Name, to be ſet up againſt Revelation, and to prove Chriſtianity, not only as to the *doctrinal* but even the *moral* part of it, to be a needleſs Inſtitution. And certainly, there cannot be a greater ſign of a *perverſe* and *deprav'd* Mind, than the *endeavouring* to depreciate it; 'As it is an Inſtitution, that contains in it the Religion of Nature explain'd, improv'd, and rais'd to greater degrees of Purity and Perfection; (regulating the inward Thoughts as well as the outward Actions; requiring us to abſtain not only from Sin, but from all *Tendencies* to it; not only from Evil, but from all *appearance* of Evil; commanding us to love and do good to our *Enemies* as well as Friends; and enforcing the ſtrict obſervance both of Moral and Chriſtian Duties, by Motives and Obligations ſtronger by far, than any that Natural Reaſon can ſuggeſt;) 'As it lays down a plain and eaſie Rule of Life, adapted to the meaneſt as well as the higheſt Capacities; 'As the Precepts of it are excellently calculated for the Peace and Happineſs of Mankind, by laying the ſtrongeſt reſtraints upon their irregular Paſſions (Anger, Hatred, and Revenge,) and every where inculcating

the moſt amiable Leſſons of Meekneſs, Benevolence, and Forgiveneſs; 'As it requires and enforces a ſtrict Obſervance of the Duties belonging to the ſeveral Relations of Mankind to one another, on which the Peace and Order, not only of private Families, but of publick Societies, ſo greatly depend; 'As it furniſhes us with the beſt Motives and moſt ſubſtantial Arguments for Comfort in the time of Affliction, and enables us to bear all the Evils of this Life with Patience and Contentment; and finally, 'As it opens to us a moſt comfortable view of Happineſs and Immortality in a future State. How ſuch an Inſtitution ſhould become the object of their Hatred and Diſlike, is not to be accounted for, but from ſomewhat very corrupt and irregular in their Hearts; which makes them firſt averſe to the Purity it requires, and, for the ſake of that, profeſs'd Enemies to the Inſtitution it ſelf.

VI. *Do not reckon the Truth of any Diſpenſation or Doctrine to be really* Doubtful, *merely becauſe ſome Men affect* to make a Doubt *of it*. There are Monſters in Mind, as well as in Body; and it is an old Obſervation, that there was no Opinion ſo *abſurd*, but what *ſome* Philoſopher had held. The truth is, Follies and Abſurdities in Opinion are without end, where Men give themſelves up to Scepticiſm, and at the ſame time are poſitive and conceited, and afraid that they ſhall not ſufficiently diſtinguiſh themſelves, and tranſmit their Names to Poſterity with advantage, but by broaching odd and ſingular Notions, and by thinking differently from the generality of Mankind; which leads them of courſe to oppoſe whatever is generally receiv'd and eſtabliſh'd. And when the Doctrines which they

they ſet themſelves to overthrow, are ſuch as curb and croſs the corrupt and inordinate Deſires of Nature, and their own Doctrines come recommended by giving full Liberty and Indulgence to the irregular Appetites of Men, and by leſſening their Apprehenſions of a future Account, it is not to be wonder'd that they gain Proſelytes.

VII. *When a Revelation is ſufficiently atteſted to come from God, let it not weaken your Faith, if you cannot* clearly ſee *the* fitneſs *and* expedience *of every part of it.* This would be, to make your ſelves as knowing as God; whoſe Wiſdom is infinite, and the depth of whoſe Diſpenſations, with the Reaſons and Ends of them, are not to be fathom'd by our ſhort and narrow Comprehenſions. God has given us ſufficient Capacity to know him, and to learn our Duty, and to judge when a Revelation comes from him; which is all the Knowledge that is needful to us in our preſent State. And it is the greateſt Folly as well as Preſumption in any Man, to enter into the Counſels of God, and to make himſelf a Judge of the Wiſdom of his Diſpenſations to ſuch a degree, as to conclude that this or that Revelation *cannot* come from God, becauſe he cannot ſee in every reſpect the *fitneſs* and *reaſonableneſs* of it: to ſay, for inſtance, that either we had no need of a Redeemer, or that a better Method might have been contriv'd for our Redemption; and upon the whole, not to give God leave to ſave us in his own way. In theſe caſes, the true Inference is, that the Revelation is therefore wiſe, and good, and juſt, and fit to be receiv'd and ſubmitted to by us, becauſe we have ſufficient Reaſon to believe that it comes from God. For ſo far he has made us competent

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Judges, inaſmuch as Natural Reaſon informs us what are the proper Evidences of a Divine Revelation; but he has not let us into the *ſprings* of his Adminiſtration, nor ſhown us the whole compaſs of it, nor the connexion of the ſeveral parts with one another; nor, by conſequence, can we be capable to judge adequately of the fitneſs of the *Means* which he makes uſe of to attain the *Ends*. On the contrary, the *attempting* to make *ſuch* a judgment, is to ſet ourſelves in the place of God, and to forget that we are frail men; that is, ſhort-ſighted and ignorant Creatures, who know very little of divine matters, further than it has pleas'd God to reveal them to us.

VIII. *Suffer not yourſelves to be drawn from the more* plain *and* direct *Proofs of the Truth of Chriſtianity, to Proofs, which however good, are leſs obvious to common Capacities.* This is an Artifice uſual with Writers who engage in a bad cauſe; to labour, in the firſt place, to fix the Merits of the Cauſe they oppoſe, upon ſome point which either has little relation to it, or at leaſt is not the *main* point; and then to run into ſuch Proofs as are moſt remote and intricate; and both theſe, on purpoſe to draw the Reader's attention from the true ſtate of the Caſe, and from the Proofs which are moſt plain, ſtrong, and direct. There are many ſorts of Proofs, by which the Truth of Chriſtianity is ſupported; as, 1, TYPES. 2, PROPHECIES. 3, The GENERAL EXPECTATION of Chriſt's coming at that time. 4, The MIRACLES he wrought. 5, His PREDICTIONS of his own Death, and Reſurrection, and of many other Events, which were punctually fulfilled: and 6, The ſpeedy and wonderful PROPAGATION of the Goſpel, after his Death.

Death. But all theſe, tho' in themſelves cogent and concluſive, are not equally *plain* and *clear* to every Capacity.

1. The TYPES which the Chriſtian Writers of all Ages have inſiſted on, as prefiguring a *ſuffering* Saviour, could not be applied to Chriſt by the *Jews* who liv'd *before* his coming, becauſe they expected a *temporal* Prince and a triumphant Saviour; but they are expreſsly applied to him, and repreſented as centring in him, by the Inſpir'd Writers of the New Teſtament, and particularly by St. *Paul*, who receiv'd his Inſtructions immediately from Heaven. The Paſchal Lamb, for inſtance, which was ſlain every Year at the Feaſt of the Paſſover, and was by God's ſpecial appointment to be *without blemiſh*, and to be ſlain only at *Jeruſalem*, and the *bones of it not to be broken*; was moſt manifeſtly a Type of our Saviour's Death; which, beſides an agreement in the circumſtances already mention'd, was on the very ſame day, and on the very ſame part of the day, that the Paſchal Lamb was appointed to be ſlain; and, by a ſignal Providence, a Bone of him was not broken; tho' it was a known cuſtom to break the Bones of thoſe who were crucified, and the Bones of the two who were crucified with him were actually broken. Well then might *John* the Baptiſt ſay to the People, *Behold the* Lamb *of God*; and St. *Paul* ſtyle him, *Chriſt our* Paſſover; and St. *Peter* ſpeak of him, *as of a* Lamb *without blemiſh and without ſpot*.

Exod. xii. 5. Deut. xvi. 5, 6. Exod. xii. 46. Numb. ix. 12.

John i. 29. 1 Cor. v. 7. 1 Pet. i. 19.

2. In like manner, the PROPHECIES of the Old Teſtament, as foretelling the Time, Place and other circumſtances of the Birth, Life, Death, and Reſurrection of the Meſſiah, with many particulars

particulars concerning the nature of his kingdom, and the times of it, are not only applied to him by the inſpired Writers of the New Teſtament, and by the ſucceeding Chriſtians in all ages, but were ſo applied by the ancient Jewiſh Writers themſelves, long before the coming of Chriſt into the world. From whence aroſe that *general expectation* of his coming at that time, which we find atteſted by the concurring Evidence of Jewiſh, Chriſtian, and Heathen Writers.

That a Meſſiah was *promiſed* in the Law and the Prophets, and that this was univerſally believ'd and acknowledg'd by the *Jews*, appears by the whole tenor of St. *Paul*'s and St. *Peter*'s Diſcourſes to them, as they are recorded in the Acts of the Apoſtles. Where we ſee plainly, the only Point in diſpute between them and the *Jews*, was, Whether or no that Promiſe was *fulfill'd* in our Saviour? For as the Apoſtles conſtantly reaſon'd with them from the Prophecies and Predictions of the Old Teſtament, ſo all their Reaſonings were to prove, that they were *fulfill'd* in him. We do not find, that any doubt was rais'd by the *Jews*, whether the paſſages quoted from thoſe Books, had been rightly applied to a Meſſiah by their own Teachers, or whether the Expectation there was of a great Deliverer was well founded in the Scriptures; the only thing, which, the *Jews* themſelves being Judges, wanted to be prov'd, was, that thoſe Scriptures were rightly applied by the Apoſtles to *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*, whom their Rulers had put to death, but who by the power of God was rais'd again to life; of which the Apoſtles were eye-witneſſes, and the truth of their teſtimony was

confirm'd

confirm'd by the miraculous Gifts and Powers of the Holy-Ghoſt. This was the great point in their Reaſonings with the *Jews*, 'To prove that *Jeſus* was the Perſon promis'd;' for which they made their Appeals to the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, and did it with great Succeſs. At *Theſſalonica*, where was a Synagogue of the *Jews*, St. Paul *went in unto them*, as his manner was, *and three Sabbath-days reaſon'd with them* out of the Scriptures, *opening and alledging, that Chriſt muſt needs have ſuffer'd, and riſen again from the dead, and that this* Jeſus *whom I preach unto you, is* Chriſt. At *Damaſcus*, he confounded the *Jews* which dwelt there, proving that this is the very Chriſt. So, in the Synagogue at *Beræa*, he reaſon'd with them out of the Scriptures; and it is ſaid in commendation of the *Jews* there, that *they receiv'd the word with all readineſs of mind, and ſearch'd the* Scriptures *daily, whether theſe things were ſo.* Of the ſame kind, was his Diſcourſe with the *Jews* at *Antioch*; *Of this man's* (David's) *Seed, hath God, according to his* Promiſe, *rais'd unto Iſrael, a Saviour, Jeſus:*—*Becauſe they knew him not* (viz. Chriſt,) *nor yet the voices of the* Prophets *which are read every Sabbath-day,* they *have* fulfill'd *them in condemning him.*———*The* Promiſe *which was made unto the Fathers, God hath* fulfill'd *the ſame to us their Children, in that he hath rais'd up Jeſus again*; according to what was propheſied by *David* and *Iſaiah*, which is there ſet forth at large. Thus alſo he defends himſelf before *Felix*, *This I confeſs unto thee, that after the way which they call Hereſy, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the* Law *and the* Prophets: and

Acts xvii. 1, 2, 3.

Acts ix. 22.

Acts xvii. 10, 11, 12.

Acts xiii. 16, 17, 23, 27, 32, 33.

Acts xxiv. 14.

Acts xxvi. 6, 22, 27, 28. before *Feſtus* and *Agrippa*, *I am judg'd for the hope of the* Promiſe *made of God unto our Fathers.*——*Having obtain'd help of God, I continue unto this day; witneſſing both to ſmall and great, ſaying none other things, than thoſe which the* Prophets *and* Moſes *did ſay ſhould come.*——*King Agrippa, believeſt thou the* Prophets? *I know that thou believeſt*; To which *Agrippa* replied, *Almoſt thou* perſwadeſt *me to be a Chriſtian.* And when he was at *Rome*, he explain'd and teſtified to the *Jews* who came to him, the kingdom of God; *perſwading them concerning Jeſus, both out of the* Law *of* Moſes, *and out of the* Prophets, *from morning 'till evening.*

Acts xxviii. 23.

The *Acts of the Apoſtles* give the like Account of St. *Peter*, who, on the Day of *Pentecoſt*, preach'd to the *Jews* upon the Evidence of the *Scriptures*, with ſuch Succeſs, that *great numbers gladly received his word, and the ſame day there were added to them about three thouſand Souls.* And a little after, upon his healing an impotent Man in *Solomon*'s Porch, and the People's running together to him, we have another Declaration of his to the ſame purpoſe: *Thoſe things which God* beforehand *had ſhewed by the mouth of all his* Prophets, *that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, he hath ſo* fulfilled.——*Whom the Heaven muſt receive, until the time of Reſtitution of all things, which God hath ſpoken by the mouth of all his* holy Prophets, *ſince the World began. For* Moſes *truly ſaid unto the Fathers,* A Prophet *ſhall the Lord your God raiſe up unto you: Yea, and all the* Prophets *from Samuel, and thoſe that follow after, as many as have ſpoken, have likewiſe foretold of theſe Days.*——*And many which heard the Word, believed, and the number of the men was about ſix thouſand.* Again, in his Speech to *Cornelius*, and

Acts ii. 1. 25.

Acts iii. 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26.

Acts iv. 4.

and his Company,——*Him* (Jeſus) *God raiſed up—and commanded us to preach to the people, and to teſtifie, that it is he which was ordain'd of God, to be the judge of quick and dead; to him give all the* Prophets *witneſs.* Acts x. 42, 43.

The ſame Appeal to the Scriptures is made by St. *Stephen: This is that* Moſes, *which ſaid unto the children of Iſrael, A* Prophet *ſhall the Lord your God raiſe up unto you.——Which of the* Prophets *have not your Fathers perſecuted? and they have ſlain them which* ſhew'd before *of the coming of the juſt One, of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers.* And *Philip* converts the Treaſurer of Queen *Candace*, whom he found reading the 53d Chapter of *Iſaiah*, by beginning at that *Scripture*, and preaching to him Jeſus; upon which he believ'd, and was baptiz'd. And of *Apollos* it is ſaid, that *he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the* Scriptures; *and that he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, ſhewing by the* Scriptures, *that Jeſus was the Chriſt.* Acts vii. 37, 52. Acts viii. 30. Acts xviii. 24, 25.

This then was the Reaſoning of the Apoſtles, and other holy Men, in order to the Converſion of the *Jews*; and it is no other, than what St. *Paul* learnt by immediate Revelation; for he tells the *Corinthians, that he deliver'd to them, that which he receiv'd, how that Chriſt died for our ſins according to the* Scriptures, *and that he was buried, and that he roſe again the third day, according to the* Scriptures; and the other Apoſtles were inſtructed in the ſame way of reaſoning by our Saviour himſelf, who a little before his Paſſion, took to him the Twelve, and ſaid unto them, *Behold, we go up to Jeruſalem*, and *all things that are written in the* Prophets *concerning the Son of Man, ſhall be accompliſhed.* But then *they underſtood none of theſe things*; and there- 1 Cor. xv. 3. Luke xviii. 31, 34.

fore, after his Reſurrection, *he open'd their underſtandings*; firſt, of two of them, whom he met going to *Emmaus*, *O fools, and ſlow of heart to believe all that the* Prophets *have ſpoken; ought not Chriſt to have ſuffer'd theſe things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at* Moſes, *and all the* Prophets, *he expounded unto them in all the* Scriptures, *the things concerning himſelf:* and then of the Eleven, *Theſe are the Words which I ſpake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things muſt be* fulfilled, *which were* written *in* the Law of *Moſes, and in the* Prophets, *and in the* Pſalms, *concerning me. Then open'd he their underſtandings, that they might underſtand the* Scriptures, *and ſaid unto them, Thus it is* written, *and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day, and that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preach'd in his name among all Nations.*

Luke xxiv. 25, 26, 27.

Luke xxiv. 42, 45, 46, 47.

Such frequent Appeals to the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, to prove that *Jeſus* was the Meſſiah, plainly ſuppoſe the *Promiſe* of a Meſſiah; and the Succeſs they had, notwithſtanding the Prejudices the *Jews* were under againſt a *Suffering* Meſſiah, ſhows the propriety and efficacy of this Argument in order to the *conviction* of that People, to whom the Promiſe was made, and whoſe earneſt *deſire* and *expectation* of a *Deliverer* had led them of courſe to be *familiarly acquainted* with the Prophecies concerning him.

But becauſe the Evidence ariſing from *particular* Types and Prophecies, is now by length of Time, and diſtance of Place, and change of Cuſtoms, become obſcure and difficult to the generality of People, and cannot be thoroughly diſcuſs'd without a great variety of knowledge concerning

concerning the ancient Jewiſh Cuſtoms, and the Authority of their Writings, and the exact Calculations of Time; All which require much Study, and leave room to ill-minded Men to diſpute and cavil, and to perplex Readers who are unacquainted with the Learning and Hiſtory of former Ages: For theſe reaſons, the Promoters of Infidelity might well hope to find their account in reſting the *whole* Evidence of Chriſtianity upon the Types and Prophecies of the Old Teſtament; partly to furniſh wicked minds with Objections, and fill weak minds with Doubts; and partly to draw and divert Mankind from attending to the more *plain*, *ſtrong*, and *direct* Evidences of the Truth of Chriſtianity.

To avoid this Snare, fix your Mind ſtedfaſtly upon the Teſtimony of *Facts* which are undeniable, and upon *Conſequences* flowing from them, which are plain and obvious to the meaneſt Capacities.

3. As to the *Facts* contain'd in the New Teſtament; they have the fulleſt Teſtimony, that any ancient Hiſtory can have: 'They are tranſmitted to us by perſons who were Eye-witneſſes of them, or at leaſt Contemporary with thoſe that were ſo, of when they had diligently enquir'd. 'Perſons, to whom no Fraud, Inſincerity, or Immorality of any kind, was ever objected: 'So far from being ſuſpected of *Deſign* or *Contrivance*, that they were deſpis'd both by *Jew* and *Gentile*, as ſimple and ignorant Men; 'Not mov'd by any proſpect of Riches, Honours, or other temporal Advantage, but on the contrary expos'd to continual Perſecutions upon the ſingle account of their giving Teſtimony to thoſe Facts; in which, notwithſtanding, they perſever'd to the laſt, and were ready

dy to ſeal the Truth of their Teſtimony with their Blood, as we are aſſur'd ſeveral of them did. Nor can there be the leaſt doubt, whether thoſe were the very Perſons who recorded the Facts as convey'd to us; ſince we find the Books by which they have been convey'd, expreſsly aſcrib'd to them, and frequently cited under their Names, by the Writers of the very next Age, and of every Age ſince; and not only receiv'd as ſuch by the ſeveral Chriſtian Churches, but admitted both by Jews and Heathens in their Writings againſt Chriſtianity. We alſo find, by the numerous Paſſages which they cite from them, and by the early Tranſlations of the Books themſelves into ſeveral Languages, that they are the ſame with thoſe we now have; and are moreover aſſur'd, that the Original Writings of ſeveral of them were preſerv'd for ſome Ages, and frequently appeal'd to by the Chriſtians, in their Diſputes with Hereticks. Theſe are the known Evidences, to prove that any ancient Book, whether ſacred or profane, was really written by the Perſon whoſe Name it bears; and it appears by what has been ſaid, that they may be applied with greater ſtrictneſs and juſtice to the New Teſtament, than to any other ancient Writing whatſoever; particularly, in the point of ſo many perſons laying down their Lives, in Teſtimony of the Truth of the Doctrines and Facts contain'd in them.

4. As to the *Conſequences* from thoſe Facts, and the Application of them in order to ſatisfy your ſelves concerning the Truth of Chriſtianity; begin with the GENERAL EXPECTATION there was of a Meſſiah or great Prophet and Deliverer, about the Time that our Saviour came. And for

for the Proof of this, you need go no further, than the Writings of the Evangeliſts: It is ſaid of *Simeon*, a juſt and devout Man, *that he was* waiting *for the* Conſolation *of Iſrael*. *Anna* the Propheteſs *ſpake of* Jeſus *to all them that* look'd for Redemption *in Jeruſalem*. Upon the appearing of *John* the Baptiſt, *the People were in* Expectation, *and* all Men muſed *in their Hearts, whether he were the Chriſt, or not*. The meſſage from *John* to Chriſt was, *Art thou he that* ſhould come? *Art thou* that Prophet? *Andrew* tells his Brother, *We have* found *the Meſſiah*, i. e. *the Chriſt*. The people, ſeeing the Miracle of the Loaves, ſay, *This is of a truth*, that Prophet *that* ſhould come *into the World*. At another time, it is ſaid by the People, *Of a Truth, this is* the Prophet: *This is* the Chriſt. The Woman of *Samaria* ſaith, *I know that Meſſiah* cometh, *which is called Chriſt*. The people ſay, *Do the Rulers know indeed, that this is the very Chriſt?* The Jews come about Jeſus, and ask him, *How long doſt thou make us to* doubt? *If thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly*. Martha ſaith to Jeſus, *I believe that thou art the Chriſt, the Son of God, which* ſhould come *into the World*. And the High-Prieſt adjures him to declare, *Whether he was the* Chriſt, *the Son of God*.

Luke ii. 25, 38.
Luke iii. 15.
Matt. xi. 3.
John i. 41.
John v. 14.
John vii. 40, 41.
John iv. 25.
John x. 24.
John xi. 27.
Matt. xxvi. 63.

Theſe are Facts, which plainly ſhow that there was among the *Jews* at that time a general *Expectation* of a Meſſiah; and this Expectation could ariſe from nothing but a known and general Agreement among them, that *that* was the Time which their Prophets had fix'd for his coming. And even the Evaſion of the Modern *Jews*, that *two* Meſſiahs were foretold, one *Suffering*, and the other *Triumphant*, is an argument from the Mouth of an Adverſary, that

that a *Meſſiah* which was foretold by their Prophets, is already come; inaſmuch, as they find it impoſſible to apply many paſſages which their own Writers before the Coming of Chriſt expreſsly apply'd to the Meſſiah, to any perſon but a Meſſiah in a low and ſuffering Condition.

5. But let your chief Regard and Attention be to the Teſtimony of MIRACLES; thoſe mighty Works which were wrought by Chriſt and his Apoſtles. For this is in its nature a moſt ſure, plain, and eaſy Proof; which the meaneſt Capacities are capable of apprehending and entring into; and which therefore was evidently intended to be the principal means of convincing all Mankind of the Truth of Chriſtianity. To deny that our Saviour wrought many and great Miracles, on all Occaſions, during the whole courſe of his Miniſtry, before Multitudes of People, in the preſence of Enemies as well as Friends, with a bare Word, and with real and permanent Effects, is to deny the Evidence of Senſe, and to deſtroy at once the Truth of all Hiſtory whatſoever; and in this particular it is to deny that which the bittereſt Enemies of Chriſtianity of old had not the Hardineſs to deny. To ſay (as the *Jews* did) that thoſe Miracles were wrought by the Aſſiſtance of Evil Spirits, is to fall into the Abſurdities with which our Saviour juſtly charges them, viz. 'That Satan caſts out Satan: 'That a Perſon whoſe Life was moſt holy, and his Doctrine divine, pure, and heavenly, was all the while carrying on the Work of the Devil; and, 'That a Preacher of Righteouſneſs, Juſtice, Mercy, Charity, Truth, Meekneſs, Patience and Peace, could be enabled to work Miracles by any Power, but what was Divine.

And

And therefore we find, that Chriſt himſelf often *appeals* to his *Works*, or the Miracles wrought by him, as full and convincing Teſtimonies of his coming from God. For inſtance, It is ſaid of *John* the Baptiſt, that he wrought no Miracles; upon which our Saviour argues thus with the *Jews*, *I have greater Witneſs than that of John; for the* Works *which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame* Works *that I do*, bear *Witneſs of me that the Father hath ſent me.* At another time, when the *Jews* came about him and ſaid, *How long doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly*; his Anſwer was, *I told you and ye believed not; the* Works *that I do in my Father's Name, they* bear *Witneſs of me*; and again, to the ſame effect, If *I do not the* Works *of my Father*, believe *me not; but if I do, tho' you believe not me, believe the* Works; and in another place, *Believe me for the very* Works *ſake.* And a little before his Aſcenſion, he tells his Diſciples, *Ye ſhall receive* Power, *after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you; and ye ſhall be Witneſſes unto me in Jeruſalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the utmoſt parts of the Earth.* Agreeably to which St. *Mark* tells us, *that they went forth, and preached every where; the Lord* working *with them, and confirming the Word with* Signs *following.* And it is ſaid in the *Acts*, that the Lord *gave* Teſtimony *unto the Word of his Grace* (*i. e.* the Goſpel) *and granted* Signs *and* Wonders *to be done by their hands.* The Miracles they were enabled to work, were the proper and ſtanding Evidences of the Truth of their Doctrine.

John v. 36.

John x. 24, 25.

John x. 37.

John xiv. 11.

Acts i. 8.

Mark xvi. 20.

Nor does Chriſt only *appeal* to his Works, and enable his Apoſtles to do Signs and Wonders in order to the Propagation of the Goſpel, but

he grounds the great Guilt of the *Jews* who rejected him, on their having ſeen his Works, and yet not been convinced by them: *If I had not done among them the* Works *which none other Man did, they had not had Sin:* and elſewhere he upbraids the Cities wherein moſt of his *mighty Works were done, becauſe they* repented *not.* And the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* reaſons thus: *How ſhall we* eſcape *if we neglect ſo great Salvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them Witneſs, both with* Signs *and* Wonders, *and with divers* Miracles *and* Gifts *of the Holy Ghoſt.* On the other hand, we are told by St. *John*, that when Chriſt was in *Jeruſalem*, at the Paſſover, many *believed* in his Name, *When they ſaw the* Miracles *which he did.* And *Nicodemus* a Ruler of the *Jews* addreſſes himſelf thus to Chriſt, *We know that thou art a Teacher come from God; for no Man can do thoſe* Miracles *that thou doſt, except God be with him.* Again, *Many of the People believed on him, and ſaid, when Chriſt cometh will he do more* Miracles *than theſe which this Man hath done?* And in another place, the Multitude who were fed with the Loaves, when they had ſeen the Miracles which Jeſus did, ſaid, *This is of a Truth that* Prophet *which* ſhould come *into the World.* And when the Chief Prieſts and Phariſees had aſſembled a Council to conſider what they ſhould do, their reaſoning was this: *What do* we? *For this Man doth many* Miracles? *If we let him thus alone, all Men will* believe *on him.* Upon which, St. *Peter* might well ſay, *Ye Men of Iſrael, hear theſe Words: Jeſus of Nazareth, a Man* approved *of God among you, by* Miracles, *and* Wonders, *and* Signs, *which God did by him in the midſt of you, as ye your ſelves alſo* know. There

John xv. 24.

Matt. xi. 20.

Heb. ii. 3.

John ii. 23.

John iii. 2.

John vii. 31.

John vi. 14.

John xi. 47, 48.

Acts ii. 22.

Theſe Appeals which our Saviour makes to his Miracles, together with the immediate *Convictions* wrought by them, are joint Teſtimonies of the Propriety and Efficacy of the Argument drawn from thence. And ſince Miracles could be no Teſtimony at all, if they were not *true* and *real*; thoſe Appeals and Convictions are of themſelves ſufficient, to ſhew the Vanity and Wildneſs of a late Attempt, to prove that our Saviour's Miracles were merely *Allegorical*; in which it is hard to perſwade one's ſelf, that the Author, if in his right Mind, can be ſerious and in earneſt. But ſince the Notion he has vented, is induſtriouſly made uſe of by Scepticks and Infidels to ſtagger and perplex unwary and ignorant People, who eaſily ſee, that if Chriſt wrought no real Miracles, Chriſtianity has no real Support; for their ſakes, and on no other Account, I will proceed to ſhow the Abſurdity of that Notion; without any deſign to convince the Author himſelf, who either is not in *earneſt*, or not *capable* of Conviction.

What he undertakes to prove, is, that the Miracles of our Saviour as we find them in the Evangeliſts, however related by them as *Hiſtorical Truths* and without the leaſt intimation that they are not be underſtood literally, were not real, but merely *Allegorical*, and that they are to be interpreted, not in the literal, but only in Myſtical Senſes; which ſtrange and Enthuſiaſtical Scheme, he has purſued throughout, in a moſt profane and ludicrous manner. His Pretence is, that the Fathers conſider'd our Saviour's Miracles in the ſame Allegorical way that he does; that is, as *merely* Allegorical, and excluſive of the Letter. An Aſſertion ſo notorioufly

riouſly falſe, that it requires the greateſt Charity to think that he himſelf did not know it to be ſo. Some of the Fathers indeed, in their Explications of Scripture to the People, of which their Sermons in thoſe days chiefly conſiſted, being willing to uſe all means and to omit no opportunities of exciting in them a ſpirit of Piety and Devotion, did not confine themſelves to the bare Letter, but endeavour'd upon the Foundation of the Letter, to raiſe ſpiritual Meanings, and to allegoriſe upon them by way of moral Application; and this, not only upon the Miracles of our Saviour, but upon almoſt all the Hiſtorical Facts which are recorded either in the *Old* or *New Teſtament*; and the ſame was alſo a receiv'd Method of Inſtruction among the *Jews*. But would he have us ſuppoſe, that the Primitive Fathers intended to *deny* the *literal* Facts of our Saviour's Miracles, or to make them *merely Allegorical*; when he has not produced any one Authority out of the whole Body of the Fathers of the firſt three hundred Years after Chriſt, except *Origen*, that can be pretended to countenance his excluding the *literal Senſe?* He has indeed heap'd together a number of Quotations; chiefly out of the Fathers and Writers of the fourth, fifth, and following Centuries; but many of the Paſſages he quotes, either expreſly affirm or evidently ſuppoſe the *literal* Truth of our Saviour's Miracles; and others of them tell us, that we muſt not *reſt* in the Letter, but endeavour to find out myſtical and ſpiritual Meanings. Now, as ſuch Quotations are far from *denying* the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles according to the letter, they can be no manner of Service to his Cauſe; and therefore it is hard to ſay for what

what end he produced them, unleſs it was to amuſe his Engliſh Readers with the Appearance of a great Variety of Authorities, which he muſt needs ſee were nothing to his Purpoſe.

And as to *Origen* himſelf; tho' he went further into the Allegorical way than any other, yet ſo far was he from not believing and allowing our Saviour's Miracles in the *literal* Senſe, that in many parts of his Book againſt *Celſus*, which conſiſts, not of popular Diſcourſes, but of juſt and ſober Reaſonings, he directly argues from them in Defence of Chriſtianity. "In anſwer to *Celſus*'s Boaſtings of the Precepts and Diſcipline of the *Greeks*, he urges, that Chriſtianity has a more divine Demonſtration, which the Apoſtle calls the Demonſtration of the Spirit, and of *Power*; and he explains *Power* to be the *Miracles* of Chriſt; which, ſays he, we believe to have been wrought, as from many other Arguments, ſo particularly from this, that the *Footſteps* of the ſame Power do ſtill appear. In ſeveral places, he takes notice of *Celſus*'s aſcribing the Miracles of our Saviour to *Art Magick*; and having particularly mention'd the reſtoring of Lunaticks, caſting out Devils and curing Diſeaſes, in the Name of Chriſt, he adds, that *Celſus*, not being able to reſiſt the Evidences ariſing from the wonderful Works wrought by him, of which thoſe he nam'd were a few out of many, aſcrib'd them to *Art Magick*; and then he ſhows at large the Abſurdity of that Suppoſition. He takes notice, that both *Moſes* and *Jeſus* did wonderful works, and ſuch as exceeded human Power, and then expoſtulates with the *Jews* for believing the Things which *Moſes* wrought, tho' recorded ſingly by himſelf, and rejecting the Miracles

Lib. 1. p. 5. Edit. Spenc.

Lib. 1. p. 7, 30, 34, 53.

Lib. 1. p. 53.

Lib. 1. p. 34.

Miracles of Chriſt, upon the Teſtimony of his Diſciples; while the Chriſtians, as he adds, were the more ready to believe the Miracles of Chriſt as recorded by his Diſciples, on account of the Prophecy of *Moſes* concerning him.

Lib. 1. p. 34. He argues for the Reality of the Deſcent of the Holy-Ghoſt upon our Saviour, from the *Miracles* which he wrought, and mentions the caſting out Devils, and the curing Diſeaſes, *in his own Time*, as one Argument of the Truth

Lib. 2. p. 87, 88. of thoſe Miracles. In proof that Jeſus was the Son of God, he urges his healing the Lame and the Blind, according to the Prophecy concerning him; and then proceeds to ſhow the Reality of what the Evangeliſts relate concerning his raiſing Perſons from the Dead, and why he rais'd no more; and adds, that his Miracles were intended, not only to be *Figures* or *Symbols*, but alſo the Means of converting Multitudes to the Chriſtian Faith; thereby plainly acknowledging the *literal* as well as the *allegorical*

Lib. 2. p. 91, 92. meaning. He proves the Truth of Chriſt's Miracles, from others *attempting* to work the like; and makes the ſame difference between *their* Works and Chriſt's, that there was between the Miracles of *Moſes* and the Magicians; and ſays, that a *Jew* who defends the Miracles of *Moſes*, is as perverſe as the *Egyptians*, if

Lib. 2. p. 91, 92. he reject thoſe of Chriſt.----- "He ſpeaks of the Miracles of *Moſes* and Chriſt, as converting whole Nations; and obſerves that Chriſt was to overthrow the Cuſtoms in which the People had been educated, and to deal with a Nation that had been taught to require *Signs* and *Wonders*, and therefore had at leaſt as great need to ſhow them, in order to gain belief, as *Moſes*, who had not thoſe Difficulties

to

to overcome. —— "He ſays, that whoever ſhould embrace the Chriſtian Religion, was requir'd by Chriſt and his Diſciples, to believe his Divinity and *Miracles*. —— "He ſpeaks of the wonderful works of Chriſt (however diſbeliev'd by *Celſus*) as the Effects of a divine Power. And, as to the Apoſtles, he ſhows how abſurd it would have been in them, to attempt the Introducing and Eſtabliſhing a new Doctrine in the World, without the help of Miracles.

Lib. 3. p. 128.

Lib. 6. p. 368.

Lib. 1. p. 30, 34.

Judge now, whether *Origen* ought to be produc'd as one who did not believe the Miracles of Chriſt, according to the *literal* Senſe, and as *full* and *proper* Teſtimonies of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion; and let this Inſtance convince you, how unſafe it is to take the Opinion of the Fathers, or of any other Writers, from *particular* Paſſages and Expreſſions which may be *pick'd* out of them, without attending to the Occaſions upon which they were written, or comparing them with the other Works of the ſame Authors. A Liberty, which has been much us'd of late; and, if allow'd, would put it in the Power of deſigning Men to make almoſt any Writer ſpeak what Opinion they pleaſe.

At the ſame time it muſt be own'd, that *Origen*, and ſome others, indulg'd themſelves further in the Allegorical way, than was conſiſtent with ſober Reaſoning and ſound Judgment; for which, He in particular was greatly blam'd, both in his own Time, and by many of the Fathers of the ſucceeding Ages. But their Intentions were certainly pious; and it could not be imagin'd, that there ever would be ſuch a Man in the World, who ſhould make it a queſtion, whether any Father believ'd the Facts

Huet. *Origeniana*, p. 170.

Facts *literally* underſtood, who in his Defence of the Chriſtian Religion againſt *Jews* and *Heathens*, appeal'd to the Miracles of our Saviour in their *plain* and *literal* Senſe, as the great Evidence of his being ſent from God. And as they practiſed the Allegorical method, not only in the point of *Miracles*, but in almoſt all the Hiſtorical parts of the Old and New Teſtament, they are as good Authorities for entirely deſtroying the whole Hiſtorical Truth of both, as that of Miracles.

Tho' therefore it were granted, that all the ancient Fathers of the Church had unanimouſly indulg'd themſelves more or leſs in the Allegorical Meanings; it would not at all help this Writer, unleſs he could make it clear, that they alſo *deny'd* the literal Meaning; and to ſay that any one who urg'd the Miracles of our Saviour as the great Vindication of Chriſtianity, could at the ſame time deny the *literal* Senſe of them, is a flat Contradiction; ſince, as I obſerv'd before, Miracles can be no Evidence at all in any other Meaning, but the literal. Much leſs will he find any thing in the Fathers, to countenance that *ludicrous* and *blaſphemous* way, in which he has treated Chriſt and his Miracles.

The truth is, the Suppoſition of an Allegorical and Myſtical meaning, excluſive of the *literal*, carries in it ſo many ſtrange Abſurdities, that nothing could lead any one into it, but either great weakneſs of Underſtanding, or great diſorder of Mind, or very ſtrong Prejudices againſt the Chriſtian Religion. For inſtance; 'That when Chriſt appeal'd to his Works, as he often did, to prove his Divine Miſſion, he meant only *allegorical* and not real Works;

Works; 'That when the People asked one another, whether the Meſſiah *when he came, would do greater works than theſe*, they did not mean real, but only *imaginary* Works; 'That when Chriſt bad the Diſciples of *John* the Baptiſt tell their Maſter, what Cures they had ſeen him work, in order to ſatisfy him that he was the Meſſiah, as working the ſame Cures which the Prophets had foretold the Meſſiah ſhould work, neither the Prophets nor Chriſt meant *real* Cures; 'That the great number of *Jews* who were converted upon ſeeing Chriſt heal the Sick, and raiſe to Life thoſe who had been Dead, did not ſee them firſt to be Sick or Dead, and then alive or whole again, and ſo had no real ground for their Converſion; 'That when the Multitudes came to be heal'd, upon their having ſeen the Miraculous Cures that Chriſt had wrought upon others, they had really ſeen *nothing*, to induce and encourage them to come to him; 'That when the Leper came back to thank our Saviour, he was not really heal'd, but came to return thanks for *nothing*; 'That when the People were amaz'd to ſee the Miracles he did, they were amaz'd at *nothing*; 'That when the *Jews fear'd* the Succeſs of his Miracles, and call'd a Council to prevent it, they were afraid only of Shadows, and conſulted about *nothing*; 'That when they perſecuted him and ſought to ſlay him, for healing a Lame man on the Sabbath-day, he had really wrought *no* Cure; 'That when the People intended to make him a *King*, on account of his extraordinary Works, they had ſeen no Works, but what any other Man might have done; 'That when it was urg'd by the *Jews*, that he wrought Miracles by the help of *Beelzebub*,

any thing could have driven them to that ſhift, but that they knew the *facts themſelves* to be real and undeniable; 'That when the People were fill'd with *wonder* and *amazement* at the Cure of the Lame man which was wrought by St. *Peter*, they did not ſee *him* leaping and walking, who before was laid daily at the Gate of the Temple to ask Alms; and when the Council could ſay nothing againſt it, nor could deny that a *notable Miracle* had been done, no ſuch thing as a Miracle had been wrought, but both *Council* and *People* were deceiv'd; 'That when *Simon Magus* deſir'd to purchaſe the Power of healing Diſeaſes, he meant to purchaſe no Power but what he had before; 'That when the People of *Lyſtra* accounted *Paul* and *Barnabas* to be Gods, they ſaw nothing in them more than common men; 'That when the People out of every Nation were fill'd with wonder, to hear the Apoſtles ſpeak every one in their own proper Language, there was really nothing to be wonder'd at; 'That the Converſions made in all Nations by the Apoſtles, of great as well as ſmall, learned as well as unlearned, were all made by them without giving any real Teſtimony of a Divine Miſſion; 'That when the Writers of the Church aſſerted the Truth of Chriſtianity upon the Evidence of the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, the *Jews* and *Heathens*, againſt whom they wrote, if they could have call'd in queſtion the Reality of thoſe Miracles, would not have fix'd their foot there, but put themſelves to the difficulty of inventing *other* Cauſes than a *divine* Power to which they might aſcribe them: In a word, 'That the whole Hiſtory of the Old and New Teſtament,

which

which is all equally capable of being run into Allegory and Myſtery by Enthuſiaſtical heads, has no Meaning at all, but ſuch as every one ſhall think fit to Allegoriſe it into, by the meer ſtrength of fancy and imagination.

Theſe are ſome of the ſhocking Abſurdities, which attend that wild Imagination of Miracles wholly Myſtical and Allegorical, and without a *literal* meaning. And as to the *Blaſphemous Manner* in which a late Writer has taken the liberty to treat our Saviour's Miracles and the Author of them; though I am far from contending, that the Grounds of the Chriſtian Religion, and the Doctrines of it, may not be diſcuſs'd at all times, in a calm, decent, and ſerious way (on the contrary, I am very ſure, that the more fully they are diſcuſs'd, the more firmly they will ſtand,) yet I cannot but think it the Duty of the Civil Magiſtrate at all times, to take care that Religion be not treated either in a *ludicrous*, or a *reproachful* manner, and effectually to diſcourage ſuch Books and Writings, as ſtrike equally at the Foundation of all Religion, and of Truth, Virtue, Serioufneſs, and good Manners; and by conſequence, at the Foundation of Civil Society.

6. But to return. To the Miracles of our Saviour, we may well add, as further Teſtimonies of a Divine Power, his PREDICTIONS of many Events, which were afterwards punctually fulfilled; 'That he ſhould ſuffer at *Jeruſalem*; That there, he ſhould be betray'd unto the chief Prieſts, and unto the Scribes, who would condemn him to death, and deliver him to the *Gentiles* to be mock'd, and ſcourg'd; That *Judas* was the Perſon who would betray him; That the other Diſciples would forſake him; That,

Luke xiii. 33, 34. Matt. xvi. 21. Matt. xx. 18, 19. Matt. xxvi. 25. Matt. xxvi. 13.

Mat. xxvi. 34. That, particularly, *Peter* would deny him thrice;
Matt. xx. 19. That, as to the manner of his Death, it ſhould be *Crucifixion*; and that he would riſe again the third Day. To which we may add, his foretelling the manner of St. *Peter*'s Death, and that
John xxi. 18, 22. St. *John* ſhould live to ſee the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; together with the Perſecutions which
Matt. x. 17, 18, 19, 20. ſhould befall the Apoſtles after his Death, and the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt to comfort and
Acts i. 8. enlighten them, and to enable them effectually to preach and propagate the Goſpel.

Luke xxi. 12, 14. But moſt remarkable to this purpoſe, is his foretelling the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and of the whole *Jewiſh* Nation, with the ſeveral Circumſtances of it: as to 'The *Time* of its coming, 'The deſtroying of the *City*, 'The demoliſhing of the *Temple*, 'The Judgments upon the *Nation* in general, 'And their final *Diſperſion*: All which were diſtinctly foretold by Chriſt; and are atteſted by *Joſephus* (an Hiſtorian of their own Nation who liv'd at the time) to have punctually come to paſs, according to the Predictions.

Mat. xxiii. 34. Mark xiii. 10. Luke xxi. 32. As to the *Time*; our Saviour having enumerated the diſmal Calamities that were coming upon the *Jews*, declares, *That* that *Generation ſhould not paſs, 'till all theſe things were fulfilled*; and he ſuppoſes, that ſome at leaſt of thoſe to whom he ſpake when he enumerated the *Signs*
Mat. xxiv. 33. of their coming, ſhould be then alive, *Ye, when ye ſhall* ſee *all theſe things, know that it is near, even at the Doors*; and, after his Reſurrection,
John xxi. 22. he intimates that St. *John* ſhould live to ſee thoſe terrible Judgments; which in Scripture are expreſs'd by his *coming*, and which were all executed, according to thoſe Predictions, in leſs than forty Years from the time they were denounced.

Next,

Next, The Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the Circumſtances of it, are thus foretold by our Saviour; *Thine Enemies ſhall caſt a Trench about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every ſide, and ſhall lay thee eaven with the Ground, and thy Children within thee, and ſhall not leave in thee one Stone upon another.—Then ſhall be great Tribulation, ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the World to this time, no, nor ever ſhall be.* All which was fulfill'd, in * *Titus*'s encompaſſing the City with a new Fortification rais'd by the Soldiers in three Days, ſo that none could come out; upon which there enſu'd a moſt † dreadful Famine; the || ſtores and granaries having been burnt and conſumed before, in the ſeditious Quarrels and Fightings among themſelves, under three ſeveral Factions endeavouring to devour one another. The City being taken, was * levell'd with the Ground, as if it had never been inhabited; and what by Famine, by Fire and Sword, and by their Slaughters of one another, † eleven hundred thouſand *Jews* were deſtroyed, beſides ninety ſeven thouſand who were taken Priſoners; the *Nation* at that time being gather'd together at *Jeruſalem*, to celebrate the Paſſover.

Luke xix. 43, 44.

Mat. xxiv. 21.

* *Joſephus*, of the *Jewiſh* Wars, l. 6. c. 13.

† c. 14.

|| *Joſ.* l. 6. c. 1.

* *Joſ.* l. 7. c. 18.

† *Joſ.* l. 7. c. 17.

The particular Deſtruction of the *Temple* is thus foretold by our Saviour, *There ſhall not be left here one Stone upon another, that ſhall not be thrown down.* And *Joſephus* tells us, That *Titus* order'd the Soldiers to lay the *Temple*, as well as the City, eaven with the Ground; and another of their Writers mentions the fact of *Turnus Rufus*'s digging the very Plot of Ground on which it ſtood, with a Plough-ſhare.

Mat. xxiv. 2.

Joſ. l. 7. c. 18. *Maimonides.*

The Judgments that would fall upon the *Nation* in general, are thus expreſs'd by our Saviour;

Luke xxi. 22, 23, 24.

our: *Theſe be the Days of* Vengeance. *There ſhall be great* diſtreſs *in the Land, and* wrath *upon this People, and they ſhall fall by the edge of the Sword.* Accordingly, they were deſtroy'd, * to the number of two hundred thouſand and upwards, in ſeveral Sieges, Battles, *&c.* in the Towns and Countries; beſides the grand Slaughter at *Jeruſalem.*

* See the *Calculation* in Archbiſhop *Uſher's Chronology.*

Luke xxi. 23, 24.

The following *Captivity* and *Diſperſion* of thoſe who remain'd, was alſo foretold by our Saviour: *They ſhall be led away* Captive *into all Nations, and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

Joſep. l. 7. c. 21.

Accordingly *Joſephus*, after he has deſcrib'd the taking of *Jeruſalem*, ſpeaks of them as a People *diſpers'd* over the Face of the Earth; and particularly tells us, that the moſt graceful of the Captives were reſerv'd by *Titus* to be part of his Triumph; that, of the Remainder, all above ſeventeen Years of Age, were ſent into *Egypt* in Chains, to be employ'd in ſervile Offices; that others were ſent into ſeveral Provinces for the uſe of the Theaters, and publick Shows; and that all under ſeventeen Years of Age, were expos'd to Sale. And ever ſince, to this Day, they have been, and ſtill continue, a People diſpers'd and ſcatter'd among the Nations of the Earth, without either Temple, or City, or Government of their own.

Joſep. l. 7. c. 16.

Theſe Particulars concerning our Saviour's Death, and the ſtate and condition of his Diſciples and of the *Jewiſh* Nation, conſequent upon it, are Events which he foretold, and which we find to have punctually come to paſs, partly from the Accounts of our own Scriptures, and partly from a *Jewiſh* Hiſtorian of undoubted Credit and Authority. And that

his

his Predictions, when fulfill'd, were intended by him to be Proofs of his being the Meſſiah, we may gather from his own Declarations. Having told his Diſciples that *Judas* ſhould betray him, he preſently adds, *Now I tell you* before *it come, that when it is* come to paſs, *ye may* believe that I am He. And after the Predictions of his Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion, he ſays, *And now I have told you* before *it come to paſs, that when it is* come to paſs, *ye might* believe, *i. e.* ſays Dr. Hammond, *That your ſeeing my Prediction fulfill'd, may convince you, that all which I have ſaid to you is true, and ſo make you believe on me.* To the ſame purpoſe, is that which he ſubjoins to his Account of the Perſecutions that would befall his Diſciples after his Death, *Theſe things I have told you, that when the time ſhall come, ye may* remember *that I told you of them.*

John xiii. 19.

John xiv. 29.

John xvi. 4.

7. From the Predictions of our Saviour, and the fulfilling of them, carry your thoughts to the ſpeedy and wonderful PROPAGATION *of the* GOSPEL; and there alſo you will ſee the cleareſt Evidences of a Divine Power: A few obſcure and illiterate Men, without Art or Eloquence, making head againſt the ancient Religions of Kingdoms and Countries, and all the while profeſſing themſelves to be the Meſſengers of one who had been deſpis'd, and ill treated, and at laſt crucified, in his own Country; and yet, under theſe diſadvantages, prevailing with Multitudes every where to be his Diſciples, and to embrace his Religion; and this, notwithſtanding the Contratiety of its Doctrines to the Luſts, Paſſions and Prejudices of Mankind, and the fierce Oppoſition it met with from the Powers of the World, and the terrible Perſecutions which

which for ſome time were almoſt the certain Portion of the Profeſſors of it; without any Encouragement to undergo them, but what was *future* and *out of Sight*. In theſe Circumſtances, nothing could lead them to *attempt* the Propagation of it with any *hope* of Succeſs, but a Promiſe of divine Aſſiſtance, and their firm Reliance upon it; nothing could have given them ſuch Succeſs, but a *divine Power* working with them; nor can any thing account for ſo many Perſons ſealing the Doctrine with their Blood, in ſo many different parts of the World, but an abſolute Aſſurance of the Truth of what they taught, and a future Reward for their Labour and Sufferings.

They who require greater Teſtimonies of a divine Miſſion and Power, than thoſe I have mention'd under this Eighth general Head, are never to be ſatisfied. But, on the other hand, when an honeſt and impartial Mind has ſatisfied it ſelf, upon thoſe Evidences, that our Saviour and his Apoſtles had a divine Miſſion, and that they wrought many and great Miracles, and foretold Events by a Power and Inſpiration evidently Divine; it follows that the Doctrines, for the propagating of which they were ſent, and for the Confirmation of which thoſe extraordinary Powers and Gifts were beſtow'd, muſt undoubtedly be true, as coming from God and atteſted by him. Particularly, their divine Miſſion and Power being firſt eſtabliſh'd, their expreſs and repeated Declarations that *Jeſus was the Meſſiah*, become to us a full and irreſiſtible proof of the Truth of it. And when a Queſtion ariſes, whether or no this or that Prophecy in the *Old Teſtament*, this or that Type in the *Jewiſh* Law, had a reference to the Meſ-

ſiah

ſiah who was to come, and were actually fulfill'd in Chriſt; it is eaſy to determin with your ſelves, whether you ought to liſten to Perſons divinely inſpir'd, who affirm they had a reference to Chriſt, or to Perſons who pretend to no ſuch Inſpiration, and would perſwade you that they had not.

The Evidence ariſing from ancient Types and Prophecies, has (as I told you before,) been fully conſider'd, and clear'd from the Cavils and Objections of Infidels, by ſeveral very *Learned* Men; it being the proper Province of ſuch, to follow the Adverſary through all the Intricacies of the *Jewiſh* Learning, and the contemporary Hiſtories, Cuſtoms, and Modes of Speaking and Writing. But as Perſons who are unacquainted with theſe Things, and uncapable of entring minutely into ſuch Enquiries, may eaſily be miſled and impos'd upon by artful and deſigning Men; ſo I have ſhown you under this Head, that you *need* not enter into them, but may receive full and clear Satisfaction from Evidences much more plain and direct, which lie equally open to all Capacities, and are perfectly well calculated for the Conviction of all, if there be but an honeſt and unprejudic'd Mind. And whoever ſhall affirm, that theſe are not a full and ſufficient ground of Conviction, without a critical enquiry into Types and Prophecies, muſt affirm at the ſame time that no part of the Heathen World, who were all equally unacquainted with the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation, could receive and embrace the Chriſtian Faith upon a juſt and reaſonable Foundation; and by conſequence, that all who did receive and embrace it, however wiſe and learned in other reſpects (which was the known Character

of many of them,) were, in that particular, *Fools* and *Ideots:* Or rather, he muſt affirm, that it is *impoſſible* for God to make any Revelation at all, that can rationally be believ'd.

But becauſe Practice (as I have obſerv'd under the three firſt Heads,) has ſo great an influence upon Principle, and it is to little purpoſe to convince the *Mind* of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, unleſs the *Will* and *Affections* be preſerv'd in a right Diſpoſition, and carefully guarded as well againſt the many Allurements to Vice and Profaneneſs which we ſee in the World, as againſt the Arts and Endeavours of wicked Men to break down the *Fences* of Religion; I will add one general Direction, which being duly attended to, will be a conſtant *Guard* againſt all ſuch Attempts and Allurements; and, by preſerving your Hearts in a Chriſtian Diſpoſition, will at the ſame time prepare them to continue ſtedfaſt in the Chriſtian Faith.

IX. And the Rule is this, *That you be careful to preſerve upon your Minds a ſerious Regard and Reverence to things* SACRED; that is, to every thing that bears a Relation to God and his Religion, particularly his *Word*, his *Name*, his *Day*, his *Houſe* and *Ordinances*, and his *Miniſters*. For theſe are viſible Memorials of God upon Earth; and, as they are the ſtanding Means of maintaining an Intercourſe between God and Man, a ſerious Regard to *them*, is a neceſſary means of keeping up in the Mind an habitual Reverence of God. On the contrary, there is not a more evident Teſtimony of a corrupt and deprav'd Diſpoſition, than an irreverent Treatment of things Sacred, a Contempt of any thing that carries on it a divine Impreſſi-

on,

on, or an obſtinate Neglect of any of thoſe Ordinances which the Wiſdom of God has appointed, to ſupport and preſerve his Religion in the World. When therefore you hear any Perſon depreciating the publick Duties of Religion, and inveighing againſt Ordinances of all kinds, and repreſenting publick Aſſemblies, and regular Miniſters for the Adminiſtration of thoſe Ordinances, to be uſeleſs, or at leaſt unneceſſary; you have great reaſon to ſuſpect, that their *final* aim is, by bringing theſe into Diſuſe and Contempt, to baniſh Chriſtianity out of the Nation. And by the ſame Rule, whoever is ſeriouſly concern'd to preſerve our Religion, and to maintain the Honour of it, muſt take great care to preſerve in himſelf, and propagate in others, a conſtant and ſerious Regard to every thing that bears a Relation to God, and to conſider it as *Sacred* on that account. Particularly,

1. As to the WORD of God; Whatever we find deliver'd by the Prophets in the *Old Teſtament*, or by Chriſt and his Apoſtles in the *New*, is always to be conſider'd by us as a Meſſage from God to Men; and whoever conſiders it as ſuch, cannot fail of paying it the higheſt Regard and Reverence; much leſs can he fail of expreſſing, on all occaſions, his abhorrence of making it the ſubject of Wit and Jeſting, and of raiſing Mirth from unſerious Alluſions to the Language or Matter of it; which, however uſual in looſe Company and among unthinking People, is a very great degree of Impiety and Profaneneſs. As the Scriptures contain the Will of God, they are certainly entitled to your moſt ſerious Regard; and the moſt

proper Teſtimony of your Regard, is, to read them frequently and with Attention; to have recourſe to them as your great Rule of Duty, and the Treaſure out of which religious Knowledge of every kind is to be mainly drawn. In them, you find a continued Mixture of Precepts, Promiſes and Threatnings; firſt, to ſhew you your Duty and remind you of it, and then to quicken and encourage you in the Performance of it. And, together with theſe, you ſee the many Examples of pious and good Men, and the numerous Teſtimonies of God's Favour to the Righteous, and his Judgments upon the Wicked. In the ſame Sacred Books, you behold the various Diſpenſations of God in the ſucceſſive Ages of the World, and the glorious Scenes of Providence, opening by degrees, and ſucceeding one another in a regular Order, and at laſt centring in the Meſſiah. And, by obſerving the *ſeveral ways* in which God has reveal'd himſelf to Mankind, you clearly ſee the Excellencies of the Chriſtian Revelation above all others, in the Purity it requires, and the Rewards it propoſes. In theſe and the like ways, do the Holy Scriptures at once delight and edifie all thoſe who attend to them, and are converſant with them, and who regard and reverence them as the Sacred Oracles of God.

2. In like manner, the NAME of God is to be eſteem'd Sacred, in order to preſerve upon the Mind an habitual Honour and Reverence to God himſelf; by not uſing it otherwiſe than ſeriouſly, and not mixing it with our ordinary Converſation, and much leſs proſtituting it to Oaths, and Curſes, and Imprecations. Such a profane uſe of his Name, inſenſibly takes off the Veneration that is due to his Being; and by making

making him leſs and leſs fear'd, emboldens Men to be more and more Wicked; and is accordingly ſeldom heard, but in looſe Company and among Men of profligate Lives. Wherefore, be careful to abſtain from a common and irreverent uſe of that Sacred Name, and of all ſuch Expreſſions as ſignify things of a religious Nature, as our *Faith*, our *Salvation*, or the like; and not only to abſtain from the undue uſe of them your ſelves, but likewiſe to take all proper occaſions to expreſs your diſlike and abhorrence of it in others, and eſpecially in thoſe who are placed under your more immediate Care.

3. The Lord's DAY is to be eſteem'd Sacred, as being ſanctified and ſet apart, for ceaſing from our worldly Care and Labour, and meditating upon God, and paying that Honour and Adoration, which he requires of us, and which belongs to him, as the Creator, Preſerver, and Redeemer of Mankind. The devout and ſerious Obſervation of this Day, is one of the moſt effectual means to keep alive Religion in the World, both in the outward Face of it, and in the Hearts and Lives of Chriſtians; and nothing is more certain, than that it would quickly be loſt and extinguiſh'd among the generality of Mankind, if it were not kept alive by the appointment of this Day, for reviving upon their Minds a Senſe of God and their Duty. Wherefore let this be a Day not only of Reſt from Labour, but alſo of Meditation upon God and heavenly things; partly, in a devout attendance upon the publick Offices of Religion, and partly by allowing a reaſonable Portion of the Day to the private Duties, of reading the Holy Scripture and other good Books, and inſtructing your Children and Servants,

vants, and examining your own Lives, and praying to God for a Supply of your own private Neceſſities, Spiritual and Temporal. I ſay, a *reaſonable* Portion of the Day, according to the *Condition* of particular Perſons and Families. For they who on all *other* days are confin'd to hard Labour, or are otherwiſe oblig'd to a cloſe attendance on their worldly Affairs, muſt be allow'd in ſome meaſure to conſider this as a Day of Eaſe and Relaxation from Thought and Labour, as well as a Day of Devotion; provided it be in a way that is innocent and inoffenſive, and that the publick Offices of Religion be duly attended, and the Duties of a more private nature be not neglected. But there are many others, whoſe Quality and Condition have freed them from the neceſſity of a conſtant attendance upon worldly Buſineſs, and to whom all other days are equally days of Eaſe and Diverſion; and from them it may well be expected, that they abſtain from their Diverſions on this Day, and employ it more ſtrictly in the Duties of Religion; for which indeed they have greater *need* than others, to arm themſelves againſt the manifold Temptations to which they are daily expos'd by Eaſe and Plenty. And when they have better opportunity, and greater need, than the reſt of Mankind, to give a ſtrict attendance to the duties of Religion on this day; if they do it not, it is much to be fear'd, that they have a greater reliſh for the Delights and Buſineſs of this World, than for Exerciſes of a Spiritual Nature.

4. Next to God's Day, his HOUSE is to be accounted *Sacred*, as it is a Place ſet apart for the performance of religious Offices, and for the publick Adminiſtration of religious Ordi-

dinances,

nances, in which all Chriſtians are bound to join. The duty of *aſſembling* for the publick Worſhip of God, appears to be a neceſſary part of the Chriſtian Religion; as well from the firſt Inſtitution of the Chriſtian Church, as from the general Practice of Chriſtians in all Ages, and all Countries. Our Saviour and his Apoſtles found the *Jewiſh* Worſhip every Sabbath-day, regularly ſettled in their Synagogues, and were ſo far from condemning thoſe Aſſemblies, that they join'd in them. After his Aſcenſion, we read, that they who upon the preaching of the Goſpel had *receiv'd the Word, continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles doctrine, and fellowſhip, and in* breaking of Bread, *and in* Prayers; and that they *continued daily with one* accord, *in the Temple*. The Chriſtians in particular Cities and Countries, are every where in the *New Teſtament* ſtyl'd *Churches*, which properly denotes an Aſſembly of Perſons call'd together into one Body; and we find the Apoſtles, ordaining *Elders* in the Churches planted by them, which Elders are alſo ſpoken of as *Heads* of the ſeveral Churches, and *Rulers* in them; and one part of the Office was, to *labour in the Word and Doctrine*, to *take heed to the Flock*, and to *feed the Church*. At *Antioch*, where the Diſciples were firſt call'd Chriſtians, *Paul* and *Barnabas* aſſembled themſelves with the Church a whole Year, and taught much People; and afterwards, we read of *Prophets* and *Teachers* in the Church *that was at Antioch*. In other places of the *New Teſtament*, we find *the firſt day of the Week* (the day of our Saviour's Reſurrection) ſpoken of as the ordinary *Time* of the Chriſtian Aſſemblies; *Upon* the firſt day of the Week, *when the Diſciples came together* to break Bread, *Paul*

Acts ii. 42, 46.

Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5. Acts xi. 30. xx. 17, 28. xxi. 18. 1 Tim. v. 17.

Acts xi. 26.

Acts xiii. 1.

Acts xx. 7.

preached

1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. *preached unto them.* And the ſame Apoſtle gives ſpecial direction to the Chriſtians at *Corinth*, as he had done before to the Churches of *Galatia*, *That upon the* firſt day of the Week *every one ſhould lay by him in ſtore as God had proſper'd him, that there might be no* Gatherings *when he came.*

1 Cor. xi. *and* xiv. In his firſt Epiſtle directed to the ſame Church, he lays down many Rules for holding their Aſſemblies in an *orderly* manner: He firſt reproves them for their diſorderly celebration of the Feaſt of Charity, and the Lord's Supper, and tells them, 'That they *came together*, not for the better but for the worſe,' That when they *came together in the Church*, he heard there were Diviſions among them, 'That their behaving themſelves as if they were eating and drinking in their own Houſes, was a *deſpiſing of the* Church *of God.* After this, he proceeds to give them a particular account of the Inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, with the direction of Chriſt to celebrate it in remembrance of him; which he elſewhere calls the Communion of the Body and Blood of Chriſt; ſpeaking of it as the Symbol of Chriſtian Union, or the badge of their Relation to Chriſt and to one another; all which is neceſſarily ſuppos'd to be perform'd in publick Aſſemblies. In the ſame Epiſtle (ch. xiv.) againſt ſpeaking in an unknown Tongue, he ſays (ver. 16.) *How ſhall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned ſay,* Amen, *at thy giving of Thanks, ſeeing he underſtandeth not what thou ſayeſt?* At the twenty third and twenty ſixth Verſes, he ſpeaks of the *Church* being *come together* into one place, and then gives further directions for their more orderly behaviour in their Aſſemblies, becauſe, as he adds at the thirty-third Verſe, *God is not the*

1 Cor. x. 6, 27.

Author

Author of Confuſion, but of Peace, as in all Churches *of the* Saints; which in thoſe days was the common name of *Chriſtians*. At the thirty fourth Verſe, *The* Women *are enjoin'd to keep ſilence in the* Churches; and he concludes with this general Direction, *Let all things be done decently and in order*. In the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, the Chriſtians are firſt exhorted *to hold faſt the profeſſion of their* Faith *without wavering*; and then, Not *to forſake the* aſſembling *of themſelves together*, even in times of Perſecution. And that they ſtrictly conform'd to this Apoſtolical Rule, we have the Teſtimony of *Pliny* a Heathen Writer, who being Governour of a *Roman* Province about the Year of Chriſt 104, gave the Emperor an Account of what he had learn'd concerning the Chriſtians, *That they us'd to meet together on a* certain Day *before Light*; (for fear of the Heathen Perſecutors;) *when they join'd in* ſinging a Hymn to Chriſt, *and enter'd into a* ſolemn Engagement *not to ſteal, nor rob, nor commit Adultery, nor defraud*; which plainly refers to the Celebration of the Euchariſt. But *Juſtin Martyr*, an ancient Father, in his Apology for the Chriſtians about the Year of Chriſt 150, gives a more particular Accouut of their publick Worſhip, "That on the Day call'd "*Sunday*, all the Chriſtians in City and Country *aſſembled in one* place; where the Writings "of the *Apoſtles* and *Prophets* were read: That "as ſoon as the Reader had made an end, there "followed an *Exhortation to the* People; and "after that, *Prayers*, and the *Holy Euchariſt*; "the Perſon who officiated, *praying*, and the "People ſaying *Amen*." To all which we may add, That from the beginning of Chriſtianity to this time, no Inſtance can be given of any

Heb. x. 23, 25.

Plin. 10. Ep. 97.

Apol. 2.

Country, in which the Chriſtian Religion has been planted, where there has not alſo been Prayer and Preaching, and Adminiſtration of Sacraments, in an open and publick Manner; tho' it is known to have been planted by *ſeveral* Apoſtles in *ſeveral* Countries.

And it is to be hoped, that there are none among us at this Day, who hold Religious Aſſemblies to be uſeleſs and unneceſſary, except the open or ſecret Enemies of Chriſtianity; who well know, how great a Means they are to preſerve a Senſe of God and Religion in the World, and to improve Men in the Graces and Virtues of the Chriſtian Life. But if there be any, who otherwiſe bear no ill Will to the Chriſtian Religion, and yet are of the Number of thoſe, who think publick Prayer, Preaching, and other Ordinances, to be Things indifferent and unneceſſary; it is, becauſe they conſider not the corrupt State of Human Nature, nor the common Condition of Human Life; how ſtrongly ſome are inclin'd to the *Delights* of the World, and to what degree others are ſwallowed up in the *Cares* of it; how ignorant many are of their Duty, and how often it is ſeen, that they who know it, practiſe it no better than thoſe who know it not; how little Diſpoſition Men naturally have to Acts of Devotion, and how unmindful they are apt to be of a future State: Upon the whole, what ſmall Hope there is, that the Generality of Mankind would retain juſt Notions of God and Religion, if they were not frequently explain'd to them; or attend to their Duty, if it were not frequently inculcated upon them; or refrain from inordinate Enjoyments, if they were not frequently warn'd of the Danger of them; or be influ-

enc'd

enc'd by future Rewards and Puniſhments, if they were not frequently put in mind of them; or, laſtly, that they would duly perform the Work of Devotion, if they were not call'd to it, and aſſiſted in it by publick Offices and Miniſters appointed for that End, and at the ſame time excited to Seriouſneſs and Attention, by the Solemnity of the Work, and the Examples of their Fellow Chriſtians. Which ſhows, on one hand, the Wiſdom of God in providing thoſe outward Means, to check and cure our inward Depravities; and, on the other hand, the Folly of thoſe who in their Reaſonings againſt Inſtituted Rites and Ordinances of Religion, ſeem to forget the Blindneſs and Corruption of Human Nature, or rather to ſuppoſe that Mankind are a Race of Angels, wholly freed from the Power of Temptations, and carry'd, by their own Nature, with the greateſt Readineſs and Chearfulneſs, into all the Acts of Adoration and Obedience.

Now, if publick Aſſemblies be neceſſary, the appointment of *Places* for thoſe Aſſemblies is alſo neceſſary; and as the Place becomes Sacred, by the Sacred Offices which are perform'd in it, ſo the true way of expreſſing our regard to the Place, is a Devout and Religious attendance upon the Offices; to conſider, that we go the Houſe of God, nor for faſhion ſake, but for the ends of Devotion and Spiritual Improvement; and accordingly to fix our Attention, and to join ſeriouſly and devoutly with the Congregation in the ſeveral parts of Divine Service. On the contrary, a willful neglect of the Chriſtian Aſſemblies, or a careleſs and irreverent Behaviour in them, is a Contempt and Profanation of the Houſe of

God, and ſavours of a Mind void of Religion.

5. As the Houſe of God is Sacred, on account of the Religious Offices that are perform'd in it; ſo are the MINISTERS who perform thoſe Offices, and who have receiv'd a regular Appointment to it; as far as they anſwer the Ends of ſuch Appointment. By their hands the Holy Ordinances of the Chriſtian Religion are adminiſter'd, by their Tongues the Word of God is explained and enforc'd, and by their Miniſtry many other Bleſſings and Benefits are deriv'd to the People committed to their Care. And as to the Neceſſity of a regular Miſſion, without which no perſon may miniſter publickly in Holy things; this appears, as well from the firſt Inſtitution of a Chriſtian Church and from the conſtant Practice of it in all Ages, as from the endleſs Confuſions that muſt unavoidably enſue, if every one might ſet up himſelf to be a publick Teacher, and intrude at pleaſure into the Miniſterial Office. Whether therefore we regard the Nature and Original of their Office, or the Work they are employed about; they are to be conſider'd as God's Miniſters, and to be received and reſpected under that Character, unleſs they forfeit their title to Reſpect, by living unſuitably to their Character. In which caſe, I am very far from recommending them either to your Love or Eſteem, ſince I know it is impoſſible for you to pay either; there being no perſon ſo truly the object of abhorrence and contempt in the ſight of all good Men, as a Miniſter of the Goſpel, who by his irregular Life renders himſelf unworthy of his Function and Character. But let me caution

you

you againſt being drawn into a diſlike of the *Order* it ſelf, as *unneceſſary*, or *uſeleſs*; for this will of courſe draw you into a diſregard of the Ordinances of Chriſtianity, or rather will aboliſh the Ordinances themſelves; and accordingly it has been labour'd by the Promoters of Infidelity, as one effectual Expedient to baniſh the face of Chriſtianity from among us. Let me alſo caution you againſt cenſuring the whole *Body* of the Clergy for the faults of a very few in proportion out of ſo great a number, and againſt charging that as Vice or Immorality, which may in reality be no more than Indiſcretion or Imprudence. In general, let me caution you againſt a *Delight* in cenſuring the Clergy, and a *Deſire* to make them appear mean and contemptible in the Eyes of their People, by which you bring upon your ſelves the great Guilt of diſabling them to do good in their ſeveral Stations; and if you find any who are really immoral, and perſevere in it, ſhow your concern for the honour of God and Religion, by taking proper methods to bring them under the Cenſures of the Church, for the Reformation of them, and the Terror of others.

X. *Above all things, beware of falling into an* Unconcernedneſs *and* Indifference, *in the point of Religion.* When a Revelation is generally believ'd to come from God, and has been receiv'd and embrac'd as ſuch by ſo many ſucceſſive Ages and different Nations, and by multitudes of Wiſe and Good Men in all thoſe Ages and Nations; When it lays down Rules for our *preſent* State, which manifeſtly tend to Holineſs, and Peace, and the Improvement and Perfection of human Nature, and propoſes to Mankind a *future* State of Rewards or Puniſhments,

ments, both of them unſpeakable and endleſs, according to their Obedience or Diſobedience to the Precepts it lays down; Certainly, ſuch a Revelation demands the Regard and Attention of a Rational Creature, ſo far as ſoberly to conſider it, and to enquire carefully into the Grounds of it, as a Matter in which he is nearly concern'd. Chriſtianity requires no farther favour, than a fair and impartial Enquiry into the Grounds and Doctrines of it; and for Men who live in a Country where it is publickly profeſs'd and where they have all the proper and neceſſary Means of Information, not to attend to it at all, or to conſider it with ſuch Indifference as if they thought themſelves unconcern'd in it, is the higheſt degree of Stupidity and Folly. Let me therefore beſeech you, to think of *Religion* as a matter of great Importance in it ſelf, and of infinite Concern to every one of you; and not to ſuffer your ſelves, either to be diverted by the Buſineſs or Pleaſures of the World from regarding it, or deluded by wicked Men into an Opinion that it *deſerves* not your Regard.

THESE, my Brethren, are the Rules and Directions which I would put into your hands, and recommend to your ſerious and frequent Peruſal; hoping that by the Bleſſing of God they may contribute to your Eſtabliſhment in the Chriſtian Faith and Doctrine, againſt all Attempts of Atheiſtical and Wicked Men to ſeduce and corrupt you. And that, under the Influence of God's Holy Spirit, they may become effectual to that great end, is the earneſt Prayer of

Your faithful Friend and Paſtor,

Edm'. London'.